**Article on the Korean War**

The Korean War from 1950 to 1953 was the most severe test the United Nations had to face since its formation in 1945. As part of the whole Cold War scenario, the Korean War was a complicated issue with which the United Nations had to successfully deal with or lose credibility just five years after it had come into being.

In June 1950, North Korean troops unexpectedly attacked South Korea and

America wanted the invasion immediately brought before the Security Council.

At the end of World War Two, Korea was effectively spilt in two; the south was in the hands of America while Russia dominated the north. The United Nations had already involved itself in the affairs of Korea when in 1947, before partition, it had declared its intentions that elections should be held for a government for the whole country and that the United Nations would oversee these elections to ensure that they were fair.

In what was to become South Korea, the United Nations declared that the elections had been fair. The Soviet presence in what was to become North Korea complicated matters as the Soviets would not allow United Nations observers in. As a result, the United Nations declared that the election results from North Korea were not acceptable as they had not been independently observed. By the end of 1948, both North and South Korea had formed separate states. The North was supported by communist Russia and when China became communist in 1949, by Mao’s China. The South was supported by America and was considered by the west to be the only democratic nation out of the two. Both governments claimed the right to govern the other.

The actual invasion of the South by the North took place on June 25th 1950. The Security Council of the United Nations met the same day. The Russian delegation to the Security Council did not attend the meeting as they were boycotting the United Nations for recognizing Chiang Kai-shek’s government in Taiwan as the official government for China whilst ignoring Mao’s communist regime in Beijing. Therefore, the obvious use of the veto (which it is assumed the USSR would have used in this case) did not occur.

At the meeting, America claimed that North Korea had broken world peace by attacking South Korea. America called on North Korea to withdraw to the 38th Parallel. Nine out of the eleven countries in the Security Council supported this view. Russia was absent and one abstained.

On June 27th 1950, America called on the United Nations to use force to get the North Koreans out as they had ignored the Security Council’s resolution of June 25th. This was also voted for and once again the Russians could not use their veto as they were still boycotting the United Nations.

The United Nations now had to formulate its plans. Sixteen member states would provide troops under a United Nations Joint Command. It would fight with the South Korean Army. This United Nations force was primarily dominated by America even to the extent of being commanded by an American general – Douglas MacArthur. However, the choice of MacArthur was hardly contentious as his ultimate success in the Pacific War made him one of the most famous generals of his era. He was also very popular with the American public who may have been less supportive of yet more foreign military intervention if a non-American had been chosen.

In 1953, a ceasefire was agreed at Panmunjon which exists to this day.

The United Nations received much support for taking robust action against an aggressor nation. South Korea regained its independence and continued to be supported by America. However, Russia had dropped its boycott of the Security Council and had rejoined it during the Korean War. It had used its veto to block numerous Security Council initiatives.

As a result of this, America put forward a resolution called ‘**Uniting For Peace**’. This stated that if the Security Council vetoed any initiative that was considered important for maintaining peace, the General Assembly should take over to keep going the impetus for peace. Russia argued about the legality of this and it was a source of much argument for many years.

Another consequence of the Korean War was the resignation of its Secretary-General, Trygve Lie. The Russians had been infuriated by the speed with which he had got the United Nations to deal with this crisis. The Russians claimed that he had acted outside of his powers. Lie had to resign as his position had become untenable without the support of the Russians.

The Korean War also gave a clear indication that the United Nations was dominated by America – nearly 90% of all army personnel, 93% of all air power and 86% of all naval power for the Korean War had come from America. This obviously meant that the United Nations could not keep out of the whole Cold War issue

**Reading questions: Answer the following questions. Be ready to explain to your group mates.**

1. Why was the Korean war so important for the UN?
2. Why did the Soviet Union not veto UN involvement in Korea?
3. Which country supported South Korea?
4. How did the Korean war end?
5. Was U.S. involvement in Korea fair or necessary?